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SUBJECT: ARMENIAN OMBUDSMAN REPORTS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

REF: A) YEREVAN 1036 B) YEREVAN 1083

Classified By: Amb. John M. Evans for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

SUMMARY

[11.](#) (SBU) On July 7, Armenian Ombudsman Larisa Alaverdyan unveiled the GOAM's first Human Rights website and released a statistical report on human rights complaints against the GOAM. The event coincided with fresh allegations that the Armenian National Security Service (NSS) continues to harass Alaverdyan as well as human rights attorneys and their clients (reftels). She discussed these issues with the Ambassador in a recent meeting. End Summary.

OMBUDSMAN LAUNCHES GOAM HUMAN RIGHTS WEBSITE

[12.](#) (U) Armenian Ombudsman Larisa Alaverdyan unveiled her office's human rights website (www.ombuds.am) at a highly-publicized event on July 7. The website includes information in Armenian-, Russian- and English-language about the services and activities of the Ombudsman's office. The site also provides an electronic form for submitting human rights complaints.

[13.](#) (C) According to Alaverdyan, the new website will improve access for rural residents to the Ombudsman's services. Though we agree the website will likely facilitate an increase in official complaints, Alaverdyan's assertion that rural residents will significantly benefit ignores the fact that the average rural Armenian family can neither afford a computer nor has training to use one.

BREAKDOWN OF HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE GOAM

[14.](#) (C) Alaverdyan told us her office received about 850 written complaints from January through June 2005. The majority of complaints involved police (110), the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (103), courts (95), the Yerevan Municipality (73), other local municipalities (65), the Prosecutor General's office (55), the Ministry of Justice (46), the Ministry of Defense (44), regional governments (36), and the Department of Migration and Refugees (22). Alaverdyan renewed her public calls for GOAM officials to fund her office at a level appropriate for handling the "hundreds of human rights complaints" she receives annually. Though Alaverdyan says she reviews each case personally, she claims staffing and budgetary constraints limit her ability to respond. Alaverdyan told us privately she believes the government limited her budget as part of a larger "campaign" to intentionally weaken her effectiveness.

NATIONAL SECURITY SERVICE STILL ASKING QUESTIONS

[15.](#) (C) In May, the Armenian National Security Service (NSS) arrested an assistant to Ombudsman Larisa Alaverdyan (ref A) on charges of fraud and corruption. Following the arrest, the NSS raided Alaverdyan's office and confiscated the assistant's computer (ref B). Alaverdyan claimed that, despite personal assurances from the NSS director to the contrary, the NSS is exploiting information gained from the computer to quiet criticism of the Administration's "awful" human rights record.

COMMENT: OMBUDSMAN STILL UNDER FIRE

[16.](#) (C) Alaverdyan continues to search for opportunities to expand the scope of her duties as Armenia's official human rights defender. The UNDP-funded website will likely attract more publicity for the Ombudsman and more human rights complaints against the GOAM, but Alaverdyan's ability to resolve these complaints and to prevent future human rights

violations remains in question. Her public condemnation of the Administration's record on human rights continues, as does her allegations that the NSS is methodically exploiting her confidential computer files to silence the Administration's critics.

EVANS